

Learners as PDP shapers: adapting ePDP to the students reflective needs

Dr. Maria Rodriguez-Yborra

The recommendations from the government Dearing Report (1997) later evaluated by Goodrich (2007), came at the point of reconfiguration from departments to schools in the University of Bolton (UoB) and thus offered the opportunity to develop, within the newly formed Schools, different approaches to fulfil the UoB PDP framework, including electronic PDP (ePDP) approach in line with its new UoB e Strategy.

Since 2008, the Faculty of Arts and Media Technology –AMT-(former AME) eLearning team, has been exploring different approaches in the use of technology to support teaching and learning, including a piloting a number of electronic media to support PDP (ePDP). The initiatives have included the use of the UoB Virtual Learning Environments -VLEs (WebCT, and later Moodle) as well as following the approaches that some subject areas have had using cloud technologies to suit learners reflective approaches and needs. In 2011, the use of Mahara was introduced after the Faculty of Advanced Engineering (FAE) showed some progress on ePDP using this Open Source tool. Since then, both Faculties have started working in close collaboration to follow the number of eTools that different subject groups seem to prefer, and assess its efficiency.



Indeed, due to the current financial climate that is affecting all departments in the University, the IT infrastructure is particularly vulnerable when financial cuts are involved. A number of initiatives have been followed using some free eTools (mostly based on Cloud technologies), apart from the open source e-portfolio system (Mahara) mentioned above. A team of technology-friendly lecturers, have introduced some free tools (GoogleApps, EverNote, VoiceThread, Weebly, WordPress, Yola, Elgg, Edublogs, Macromedia Flashplayer, etc) to pilot them within their own subject groups (Art & Design, Graphic Design, Photography, Creative Writing, Media and Creative Technologies), claiming they respond better to their 'reflective' style, and student seem to be enjoying the ePDP experience using different tools for different subject groups.

Will time tell?

Currently, the use of an electronic tools for PDP purposes is popular among students and staff, although the diversity of tools has increased in the past 12 months. We intend to review all ePDP practice in 12 months and inform the University's PDP policy for potential positive applications across the institution. Despite all these positive initiatives and developments, still the **reflective** requirement for PDP proves to be the biggest challenge, not least with academic staff, leaving technology as an anecdote.

Further info: <http://pierproject.edublogs.org/>

Contact: Maria Rodriguez-Yborra mar2@bolton.ac.uk